

573^x themselves of the usual and ordinary obligations incumbent upon
 577 them on the death of a son-in-law. Should this be taken as a kind
 562 of implied condemnation of suicide? [278]

573^x The wisdom of the elders recommends to youth that they
 578 not let anger lead them to brutal acts even where, legally, it is
 577 permissible to use force. They do not act in such a way through a
 626 policy of adaptation to the present regime. Even before the arrival
 of the white men, they gave lessons in calm and self-mastery. For
 serious blows, wounds, and especially homicide could have de-
 plorable consequences legally and even politically (war). They pre-
 ferred recourse to punishments, such as abstention from food and the
 refusal of debitum conjugale, which although less violent are not
 without efficacy. In that way they were also spared the vexation
 of in-laws, whose pity would be aroused by the wounds and bodily
 suffering of their child or sister.

578 One thing that deserves blows or a good whipping because it
 577 is considered a serious failure in the fulfillment of the duties of mar-
 ried life is indifference and negligence in housework. A husband
 may safely deal forcefully with the situation, although he must first
 inform the qualified authorities. The following are some examples
 of such faults: the wife does not give the necessary attention to
 the kitchen, her children, the cleaning of the hut and court; she
 neglects her crops, does not go fishing, makes no attempt to obtain
 salt, etc.; in short, she does not give the required time and care
 to the tasks incumbent upon her. She herself, her children, and her
 house remain disgustingly filthy, her fields and banana groves are
 invaded by weeds and her pantry is devoid of utensils and food, while
 she wastes her time doing nothing or rather spends it running about
 the village, going to one woman's house, chatting with another,
 spending the better part of her day gossiping. The Nkundó does not
 put up with this sort of behavior, and no one can reproach him.
 Even other men and the woman's companions condemn [279] such
 conduct. Often the woman is ridiculed, and on occasion she may
 [284] hear unflattering comments such as bómot 'ŋw'aaoló, efufa g'g'ngamaka,
 "a gossip, her cloth is to the side," that is, the interminable chatting

857 for young boys is hunting and fishing by all sorts of methods suitable
868 for their age. Little by little an adolescent learns the usual tasks
and everything that he needs to know in order to survive and obtain
food and shelter. His instruction is completed by his companions
and above all by the exigencies of life.

A girl learns housework and farming. Very early her
mother braids a small basket for her in order to accustom her to
carrying loads. She also participates in the women's fishing.

In general one has the impression that the girls are far more
active than the boys. But I think that this difference is due to the
fact that the boys are almost always in the forest, while the girls
remain in the village and are therefore noticed more. As a matter
of fact in our missions it cannot be said that the boys work less well
than the girls, quite the contrary.

The girls practice the culinary art, not only with their
mothers but also -- as in Belgium -- in a game (ioto).

867 The children do not study the history, laws, and traditions
869 of their clan or tribe. They learn them in the [508] course of
events, either by hearing them described or by asking questions.

Often their parents explain such matters on their own initiative, not
according to a definite program but rather when opportunities arise.
A young man can learn many things especially by accompanying
his father on visits, on trips, at meetings and deliberations, or by
listening attentively to the performances of troubadours who play the
longombé (mandolin). The astonishing knowledge of usages and
customs, ancestral laws, history, the wisdom of the ancients, proverbs,
fables, etc., possessed by some youngsters, to the point of excelling
their elders, can be explained by their faithfulness in following
papa instead of continuously enjoying the freedom of the forest. I
have encountered more than one instance of this sort which was
explained primarily on the basis of the boy's attachment to his father.

868 The Nkundó child begins to hum popular tunes and imitate
the rhythmic movements of the dancers when he is barely able to
walk. Little girls, especially, practice special dances of their own.
Then, little by little, the children mix with the group of adult
dancers and are able to join the chorus, though they must remain in
the rear.

368 Parents teach their children the trades that they themselves know: forging, wood sculpture, the weaving of mats and baskets, pottery making, etc.

● 367 With respect to ethics, the children learn a great deal from experience, but parents do not fail to teach them rules of politeness, decorum, good breeding, and the great principles of social relations. As in Europe, however, there are degrees of concern or indifference in this realm. The moral code taught is the one the parents themselves practice. It is centered above all on family and society; respect toward members of the family, mutual assistance, respect for the welfare of others, fear of the opposite sex, etc. But all of it has a naturalistic basis: the reason given for adherence to such precepts is limited to the unpleasant consequences [509] that would otherwise result. Reprimands and even corporal punishments for infractions are not unknown. But they are chiefly due to exasperation and therefore mixed with anger and without any continuity or consistent idea. Once the anger has passed the threats remain sterile. For punishment the parents [461] resort chiefly to blows, but other penalties are also common. For instance, one of our catechists when he was young (between 1880 and 1895) had removed a little bird trapped in a snare belonging to one of his cousins. As soon as his father heard what he had done, he gave the youngster a good scolding and made him go to bed without supper.

As a girl approaches puberty, her mother teaches her the rights and duties of a married woman. She teaches her how to behave and conduct herself in order to be a good wife and mother. She does this so that her daughter may find a good husband, and so that the union may be stable and not produce too many palavers or trouble.

Formerly, children were not allowed to see the dances of adults. They were chased away and had to amuse each other. This was an excellent means for preserving morality among the youth and retaining their respect for their elders. Therefore it is most regrettable that it has been abandoned.